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January 28, 2002

Mr. David A. Meyers  
Justice Information Systems Coordinator  
Policy and Planning Department  
Department of Information Technology  
401 SW Seventh Street, Suite N  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Mr. Meyers:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with the Iowa Criminal Justice Information Systems Integration Strategic Planning Team on November 2, 2001. Teri Sullivan, Dale Good, and I enjoyed the experience of talking with Iowa's criminal justice technology leaders and learning about your progress. It was evident from our visit that all of you are committed to improving the integration of justice information.

As we discussed during our site visit, this letter will outline some of our initial impressions, observations, and areas where SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, might be of further assistance as Iowa continues its statewide integration planning.<sup>1</sup> As you know, our visit was brief, but was intended to accomplish five things: 1) to meet with some of the key players involved in the state's justice system technology efforts to understand and discuss the status of and support for integration in Iowa; 2) to provide information on how other states have created support for integration projects at the policy and political levels; 3) to discuss important steps that can be taken within existing budget and personnel allocations to prepare for future funded initiatives; 4) to help map out an agenda for the planning team; and 5) to indicate how SEARCH can provide additional assistance to the state of Iowa in the future.

## **Background**

On September 20, 2001, you submitted a technical assistance (TA) request to SEARCH, which described your integration project as follows:

“To work collaboratively with the Governor and his designees; the Iowa Supreme Court and staff; policymakers

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<sup>1</sup> SEARCH provides onsite, no-cost assistance to state and local jurisdictions in planning for and implementing automated and integrated information systems. This assistance is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. Background on SEARCH, and the National Technical Assistance Program is included in Appendix A.

from federal, state, and local governments; and criminal justice agencies and associations, to develop and implement information technology solutions for the purpose of integrating the criminal justice system from courts, law enforcement, corrections, and other governmental entities. This is a statewide initiative intended to integrate multiple systems from multiple levels and branches of government.”

In describing what you hoped to accomplish and how SEARCH could assist, you provided the following thoughts:

“Iowa has launched a major statewide initiative to integrate its criminal justice information systems. We are at a point where we are ready to take some significant steps in the process and we want to receive guidance and direction from recognized experts in order to make the best decisions possible. The objective of this assistance is to develop a clear roadmap for the future of Iowa’s integration efforts and to establish a solid foundation to build on . . .”

“We would like to receive assistance from someone who is familiar with what other States have done in integrating their justice information systems to help us with our integration efforts. We would like assistance developing a business plan, conducting a needs assessment, and establishing a governance board/structure. Additionally, we would like to receive guidance on when and how we should bring all stakeholders into the process and how we can protect their needs as well as maximize their buy-in to the process. Also, we would appreciate input on the development of a media and outreach strategy.”

During several conversations in early October, we refined the scope of the TA project to focus on the most important issue you face, getting executive commitment and organizational support for your integration efforts. Because successful integration will require significant funding to create, replace, and upgrade systems, strong support from the leadership of all three branches of government at the state and local levels will be necessary. It is essential that a governing board for the initiative has ownership of strategic and action plans, so it makes little sense to go too far with planning until such a group is in place. Of course, a great deal of preparatory work will be required, so there still is much that your team can accomplish in the short term.

Once the scope of the TA engagement was established, project staff members were assigned by SEARCH. The TA team included Larry Webster, Teri Sullivan, and Dale Good. Ms. Sullivan and I are SEARCH Justice Information Systems Specialists, while Mr. Good serves as the judicial branch CIO of Minnesota. All three consultants have an extensive background in court automation and criminal justice system integration. Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Good were selected particularly for their experience in establishing public and political support for this type of technology initiative in other states.<sup>2</sup>

Your office provided a number of reports in advance and at the meeting that were reviewed by the project team. They proved to be very helpful in preparing for the site visit.<sup>3</sup>

The site visit consisted of a daylong meeting with the Iowa Criminal Justice Information Systems Integration Strategic Planning Team,<sup>4</sup> consisting of representatives of the following organizations:

- Department of Information Technology
- Department of Public Safety
- Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning
- Judicial Branch
- Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Investigation
- Department of Corrections

This report completes the first phase of the technical assistance project. Additional follow-up activities may be conducted after an integration governance structure is established in Iowa. This review will be organized as follows:

- Assessment of integration status
- Key elements of a strategy to gain political support for integration
- Other activities that can be completed with minimal funding
- Agenda for the planning team
- Additional SEARCH assistance

## **Assessment of Integration Status**

Full end-to-end, statewide integration of justice information systems is not feasible in Iowa at present because of the lack of automation in jails and prosecutor's offices. Long-term plans must provide for the development of this capability, even if it is limited to Internet-based reporting in remote, rural areas. A large proportion of the total information exchanges involve the prosecutor or jail as sender or receiver of information, so these linkages are critical to providing timely information to decision makers.

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<sup>2</sup> Biographical sketches are included in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> A list of documents provided to the project consultants is included in Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> A list of meeting participants is included in Appendix B.

There are many opportunities to integrate major parts of the criminal justice process in Iowa because of the existence of statewide systems for courts, corrections, transportation, and law enforcement. A number of interfaces between these systems have been developed in a piecemeal fashion over the years. These interfaces demonstrate the value and feasibility of integration.

The state has taken some steps in the right direction. For example, the creation of your position of Justice Information Systems Coordinator and an integration plan show commitment to better use of technology and information sharing in the future. As has been mentioned, the dedication of resources to linking existing systems at the state level also is a positive sign. Grant funds from the National Governor's Association and Byrne program have been allocated to support integration, and stakeholders have participated in national forums and training sessions. In addition, the fact that your integration strategic planning team is meeting and working also shows a willingness of the state of Iowa to focus resources on this important undertaking.

The state faces obvious obstacles to continued success that cannot be ignored. Differences in organizational culture within the justice community affect communication and cooperation in Iowa as in every other state. For example, law enforcement and prosecution seek to protect the confidentiality of information during investigatory phases of a case, while courts are committed to open and public proceedings and records. In addition, the shared need to maintain the inter-branch and inter-agency independence often conflicts with the need to coordinate and standardize business practices. None of these problems is insurmountable; each must be managed carefully so that all participants remain at the table working together.

Strong political support for the integration project is missing and is the major barrier confronting the strategic planning team. As Mr. Murphy pointed out, 80 percent of the obstacles identified by the planning team in the grid exercise are political in nature. Without support and commitment in place, most of these problems will remain unresolved. The creation of an inter-branch, intergovernmental governing body is the needed remedy for this problem. Since the resource picture appears bleak in coming years, getting a significant amount of investment in justice system technology will be impossible unless it is very high on the agenda of political leaders.

Other challenges to success with integration exist in Iowa, including inadequate infrastructure, problems with data quality, and lack of trust between organizations. Current efforts to connect systems have been characterized as belonging to the *anarchy model* of integration, in which every interface is a custom development project with high overhead, no overall architecture, standards, or plan, and with no forum to resolve issues. Lack of participation of local governments in the current process also is a problem.

The fact that there are many obstacles simply means that there is a great deal of work to be done. Integration is the right thing to do, so progress will come, even if at a frustratingly slow pace. The important thing is to keep moving.



## **Key Elements of a Strategy to Gain Political Support for Integration**

The most important parts of SEARCH's participation in the Integration Strategic Planning Team meeting were presentations from Mr. Good and Ms. Sullivan showing how political support was obtained for their projects.

In Minnesota, a number of events combined to raise integration to a high priority for political leaders. It began with a critical audit in the early 1990s, followed by recognition by the business community that the state's reputation for crime was scaring business away. Two high profile abductions and murders — cases where good information may have saved the victims or at least aided in identifying and apprehending the defendant more quickly — crystallized public support for improvement of justice system information sharing.

Justice system officials were able to show political leaders:

- How poorly the current system was working,
- How serious the consequences of failure could be,
- A plan for correcting the problem, and
- How the new system would increase accountability for criminal behavior and system performance.

They were able to help resolve concerns about cost by showing what a small proportion of total state and local government expenditures on justice would be required to fix the problem and by comparing private and public sector investment in technology, roughly 50 percent of non-capital investment in the business world, compared to 7 percent for government.

With the help of two key legislators, business leaders, and community groups, they were able to convince a reluctant governor and other legislators to support integration in Minnesota. Most important, they were able to turn a potentially negative situation into a positive outcome and received over \$60 million to begin work on the project.

The Nashville, Tennessee, experience was quite different. The triggering events in Davidson County were a lack of systems and information to effectively manage operations and policy, and the desire of government leaders to make the system work the way it should. To achieve these goals, a unique, cooperative organization was created by local ordinance and was comprised of all of the elected and appointed justice officials. The purpose of JIS was to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated justice system that would be managed and controlled by the members of the justice community. The members of JIS felt that an independent agency was required due to the important and sensitive nature of justice-related activities. Matters of public safety, confidentiality of certain records, and the efficient administration of justice were paramount considerations in establishing this organization. Because there was near unanimous

political support by the key justice system leaders, obtaining funding was relatively simple.

The state of Iowa can learn a great deal from the experiences of Minnesota and Tennessee. Both states used existing circumstances to generate political support for important integration initiatives. The circumstances in Iowa are much different, but can be used in much the same way. Since September 11, more attention has been focused on homeland security. Because we catch terrorists and criminals with information, not with guns, the urgency of integration projects should increase. In Iowa, as in Minnesota and Tennessee, it is important to find political and policy leaders — including the Attorney General — to champion the integration issue, or political support will not occur.

As was mentioned in the meeting by Iowa CIO Rich Varn, a solid business case for integration must be built and clearly and consistently articulated. Audits, statistics, and anecdotes are needed to help sell the concept.

There is tremendous advantage in the political arena to having the executive and judicial branches speaking with one voice on this issue, so efforts to educate and enlist support throughout the justice community should not be limited.

### **Other Activities that Can Be Completed with Minimal Funding**

While successful integration projects usually entail the creation or modification of information management systems, which can be very expensive, there are many things the state of Iowa can be doing to make progress that do not involve significant appropriations. The following list provides some suggestions.

- Create a governance structure involving all major stakeholders in the justice system
- Build consensus and support for integration throughout the three branches of Iowa state government
- Prepare a charter for integration projects — a memorandum of understanding may fit best for Iowa
- Assess the problem by studying where information moves well in the system and where the problems exist
- Develop a strategy to address each of the problem areas that are identified
- Document the existing interfaces between systems
- Analyze data exchange — electronic and paper — with the SEARCH information exchange tool
- Develop data and technical standards that will apply to interfaces between systems
- Develop architecture to cover short- and long-term development of system interfaces
- Work on building infrastructure to match the design
- Find some short-term wins — new interfaces and access points — that can demonstrate and publicize success

## **Agenda for the Planning Team**

During our site visit, we discussed many things the planning team can do in the short term to push the integration initiative forward. There seemed to be clear consensus on the five items of highest priority:

- Developing a governance structure
- Planning
- Designing architecture and infrastructure
- Analyzing data exchanges in Iowa, including documenting existing interfaces
- Developing data and technical standards

## **Additional SEARCH Assistance**

SEARCH can assist the state of Iowa in the future in many ways. Staff is experienced in orienting and educating governing bodies and key individuals in the integration process. Our data exchange tool can be of tremendous value in documenting and analyzing information flow within the Iowa criminal justice system, as it was in the state of Minnesota. With some training and assistance, you could begin using this tool in the coming year. We also are available to review and comment on plans, to assess the results of your efforts, and to assist with problems you may encounter along the way.

## **Conclusion**

The key to success in Iowa, at this point, is in gaining high-level political and policy support for integration. This can be done with the creation of a governing body, properly charted through a joint executive and judicial branch order or a memorandum of understanding. Given the recent history, the memorandum of understanding seems like the most appropriate way to proceed.

At present, integration is still an IT issue in Iowa, but needs to be elevated to a public safety, good government, and budget issue. The planning team is in a key position to work collectively and individually with its sponsoring organizations to create the enthusiastic support that is needed.

We appreciate the opportunity of working with you and assisting with your project. We wish you luck and know that you will find success as you continue down the path you are taking. We offer our assistance at any time in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lawrence P. Webster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lawrence P. Webster  
Justice Information Systems Specialist

## **Appendix A: SEARCH, the Technical Assistance Program, and the Project Team**

SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, is a nonprofit membership organization created by and for the States, dedicated to improving the criminal justice system through better information management and the effective application of information and identification technology.

SEARCH's primary objective has been to identify and help solve the information management problems of State and local justice agencies confronted with the need to automate and integrate their information systems and to exchange information with other local agencies, State agencies, agencies in other States, or with the Federal government.

SEARCH is governed by a Membership Group comprised of one gubernatorial appointee from each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Members are primarily State-level justice officials responsible for operational decisions and policymaking concerning the management of criminal justice information.

A staff of professionals works from SEARCH headquarters in Sacramento, California. SEARCH provides justice agencies with diverse products, services and resources through three interlocking programs: Systems and Technology, Law and Policy, and Research and Statistics.

### **SEARCH:**

- Is the national provider of no-cost technical assistance to address the specific needs of operational State and local justice agencies in the process of acquiring, developing, upgrading or integrating their computer systems.
- Offers hands-on training to local, State and Federal agencies on computer technology issues with criminal justice applications. Courses are offered on such topics as investigating computer crime, basic and advanced Internet crime investigations, network investigations, and on-line child exploitation investigation.
- Sponsors national conferences, symposia and workshops for local, State and Federal justice practitioners.
- Prepares national research, analytical and survey reports and bulletins on a range of timely issues in criminal justice information management, technology, and law and policy, which are then published and disseminated by the U.S. Department of Justice.

### **The National Technical Assistance Program**

The National Technical Assistance Program, administered by SEARCH with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice,

provides no-cost assistance to all components of the State and local criminal justice system with respect to the development, operation, improvement and/or integration of all types of criminal justice information systems (for example, records and case management, computer-aided dispatch and criminal history record systems, etc.). The Technical Assistance Program includes both in-house and on-site technical assistance:

- In-house technical assistance includes consultation with agencies via telephone, mail and electronic network (Internet and World Wide Web). These technical assistance projects can include consultations and information about automation, integration and planning issues, as well as review of agency automation/integration planning materials, needs assessments, data modeling and requests for proposals.
- On-site assistance helps agencies in their efforts to effectively plan for, design, develop, procure and implement computerized information systems, and can involve the following: conducting needs assessments, identifying system requirements, developing or reviewing site-specific planning documents; planning projects to achieve integration of information systems across functional and/or political boundaries; assistance in writing technical proposals; providing technical consultations on a wide range of operational and policy issues; proposing solutions to system problems; locating expertise and information systems for transfer; and guiding the transfer and implementation of systems and techniques to improve information management.

## **SEARCH Online Resources**

SEARCH provides a wide variety of information about justice information systems, related technologies, standards, research and technology acquisition via the Internet and World Wide Web. In addition, SEARCH offers access to criminal justice policy research, including electronic newsletters and briefing papers, automated research databases and documents and hypertext linkages to relevant research data. All of the Web sites can be accessed via the SEARCH home page at [www.search.org](http://www.search.org).

## **SEARCH Consultants**

**LAWRENCE P. WEBSTER** is a Justice Information Systems Specialist with SEARCH. He previously served as Delaware's State Court Administrator, Executive Director of Court Technology Programs at the National Center for State Courts, Director of Data Processing for the Utah courts, System Manager for the U.S. Attorney, District of Colorado, and Manager of Operations and Systems Development for the Colorado District Attorney's Council. He has delivered numerous seminars, presentations, and courses and has headed or participated in research, education, and consulting projects related to technology in the justice system. He was the principle author of *A Guidebook for Electronic Court Filing*

and *Automating Court Systems*, and has prepared or assisted with many other books, articles, and papers on similar topics. He holds a Master of Science in Judicial Administration degree from the University of Denver College of Law, is a fellow of the Institute for Court Management, and is a graduate of ICM's Court Technology Certificate Program.

**TERI B. SULLIVAN** is a Justice Information Systems Specialist for SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics. In this capacity, she provides technical assistance to operational State and local justice agencies nationwide that are in the process of acquiring, developing, upgrading, or integrating their computer systems. This assistance is provided under SEARCH's National Technical Assistance Program funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.

Ms. Sullivan was previously a Special Consultant for SEARCH. Prior to joining SEARCH in 2001, for 6 years Ms. Sullivan was Director for the Metro Davidson County Justice Information System, a complex, event-driven, enterprise-based system that serves the justice agencies in Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee. In previous positions, Ms. Sullivan developed and implemented high transaction volume relational database systems for health care industry applications. Her responsibilities have included management of significant vendor (subcontractor) activities, as well as development of in-house database/application and support infrastructure.

In May 1997, Ms. Sullivan was accepted as a Fellow of the Institute of Court Management after completing the required course work for the Court Executive Development Program from the National Center of State Courts.

Ms. Sullivan received a J.D. from the Nashville School of Law and a bachelor's degree in Information Systems Management from Belmont College in Tennessee. She is a member of the Nashville Bar Association.

**DALE GOOD** is an information technology manager with 25 years experience in court and justice information, applications, and technologies. He is currently the Chief Information Officer for the Minnesota Judiciary. He has expertise managing large-scale information technology initiatives in the Minnesota courts and criminal justice community, and has provided leadership and direction on critical planning efforts for court and cross-agency projects. He also has expertise in system design, integration, development, implementation, and operation, as well as quantitative analysis and statistical research. He is knowledgeable in technology architectures, project management best practices, and court and criminal justice business practices, organizations, and issues. He has supported court and justice business requirements using a variety of technologies including legacy mainframe, client-server, LAN/WAN, web, and data warehousing. He conceptualized and participated in the creation of a multi agency collaboration

devoted to the improvement of criminal justice data and systems. This effort resulted in a coordinated approach to legislative funding, multi-agency information technology architecture, and a coordinated approach to cross-agency systems development and implementation. Mr. Good is an effective speaker and is regularly invited to explain complex technology concepts to lay audiences including the Minnesota Legislature, legal community, county and city leaders, business leaders and national professional associations and conferences. He has a demonstrated track record of recruiting and retaining technology staff, as well as hiring highly qualified consultants from professional services firms.



## **Appendix B: Iowa Criminal Justice Information Systems Integration Strategic Planning Team Members at November 2, 2001 Meeting**

- David Meyers, Iowa Department of Information Technology
- Carroll Bidler, Iowa Department of Public Safety
- Dick Moore, Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning
- Larry Murphy, Iowa Judicial Branch
- Ken Bosier, Iowa Judicial Branch
- Terry Hoil, Iowa Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Investigation
- Larry Grund, Department of Public Safety
- John Baldwin, Department of Corrections
- Dale Good, Minnesota Courts
- Teri Sullivan, SEARCH
- Larry Webster, SEARCH

## **Appendix C: Documents Reviewed**

- SEARCH Request for Technical Assistance Form
- Project Plan: Criminal Justice System Integration
- State of Iowa Criminal Justice Information Systems Integration Strategic Plan
- Grid Exercise: Integration Strategic Planning Team
- Criminal Justice Information Systems Integration (CJIS): Statement of Work
- State of Iowa Justice Information Systems Integration: Where Are We Now?